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PROGRAM ABC World News This Morning STATION WJLA-TV
ABC Network

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SUBJECT Pakistan and the Krytron Device

KATHLEEN SULLIVAN: And this morning another country has moved closer toward joining the list of countries that have either tested nuclear weapons or have the capability to do so.

Senior correspondent John Scali reports.

JOHN SCALI: This device is called a krytron. It's an electronic switch whose main purpose is to help trigger a nuclear bomb. It's made in the U.S. and its export is carefully controlled to keep it out of the hands of anyone who might try to build a nuclear weapon.

ABC News has learned that the CIA has now reported to top U.S. officials that some of these krytrons have been acquired by Pakistan for use at its supersecret nuclear complex at Kahota (?), some 20 miles from the capital, Islamabad.

Further, U.S. Intelligence has evidence that last month Pakistani scientists successfully tested the firing mechanisms, producing a non-nuclear explosion.

This comes only eight months after a Pakistani national was arrested in Houston and deported for trying to buy 50 krytrons. How Pakistan acquired these other krytrons is unknown, but it's enough to cause new alarm in Washington, even though President Zia of Pakistan insists his nuclear activities are strictly for peaceful purposes.

U.S. experts say Pakistan is still one to two years away from completing a nuclear bomb, but they acknowledge that with this development, Pakistan has moved a big step closer.